

The CZAR'S SPY

The Mystery of a Silent Love
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CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

I stood before him open-mouthed. Who in Russia had not heard of that mysterious unknown person who had directed a hundred conspiracies against the imperial autocrat, and yet the identity of whom the police had always failed to discover. It was believed that Kampf had once been professor of chemistry at Moscow university, and that he had invented that most terrible and destructive explosive used by the revolutionists. The ingredients of the powerful compound and the mode of firing it were the secret of the nihilists alone—and Otto Kampf, the mysterious leader, whose personality was unknown even to the conspirators themselves, directed those constant attempts which held the emperor and his government in such hourly terror.

Rewards without number had been offered by the ministry of the interior for the betrayal and arrest of the unseen man whose power in Russia, permeating every class, was greater than that of the emperor himself—at whose word one day the people would rise in a body and destroy their oppressors.

"You are surprised," the old man laughed, noticing my amazement. "Well, you are not one of us, yet I need not impress upon you the absolute necessity, for mademoiselle's sake, to preserve the secret of my existence. It is because you are not a member of 'The Will of the People' that you have never heard of 'The Red Priest'—red because I wrote my ultimatum to the czar in the blood of one of his victims knotted in the fortress of Peter and Paul, and priest because I preach the gospel of freedom and justice."

"I shall say nothing," I said, gazing at the strangely striking figure before me—the unknown man who directed the great upheaval that was to revolutionize Russia. "My only desire is to save Mademoiselle Heath."

"Are you prepared to do so at the risk of your own liberty—your own life? Ah! you said you love her. Would not this be a test of your affection?"

"I am prepared for any test, as long as she escapes the trap which her enemies have set for her. I succeeded in saving her from Kajana, and I intend to save her now."

"Was it you who actually entered Kajana and snatched her from that tomb?" he exclaimed, and he took my hand enthusiastically, adding—"I have no further need to doubt you." And turning to the table he wrote upon a slip of paper, saying, "Take mademoiselle there. She will find a safe place of concealment. But go quickly, for every moment places you both in more deadly peril. Hide yourself there also."

I thanked him and left at once.

I found Elma in her room, ready dressed to go out, wearing a long traveling cloak, and in her hand was a small dressing case. She was pale and full of anxiety until I showed her the slip of paper which Otto Kampf had given me with the address written upon it, and then together we hurried forth.

The house to which we drove was, we discovered, a large one facing the Fontanka canal, one of the best quarters of the town, and on descending I asked the liveried doorman for Mademoiselle Zurloff, the name which the "Red Priest" had written.

"You mean the Princess Zurloff," remarked the man through his red beard. "Who shall I say desires to see her?"

"Take that," I said, handing to him the piece of paper, which, besides the address, bore a curious cipher mark like three triangles joined.

He closed the door, leaving us in the wide, carpeted hall, the statuary in which showed us that it was a richly furnished place, and when a few minutes later he returned, he conducted us upstairs to a fine, gilded salon, where an elderly, gray haired lady in black stood gravely to receive us.

"Allow me to present Mademoiselle Elma Heath, princess," I said, speaking in French and bowing, and afterwards telling her my own name.

Our hostess welcomed my love in a graceful speech, but I said:

"Mademoiselle, unfortunately, suffers a terrible affliction. She is deaf and dumb."

"Ah, how very sad!" she exclaimed sympathetically. "Poor girl! Poor girl!" and she placed her hand tenderly upon Elma's shoulder and looked into her eyes. Then, turning to me, she said: "So the Red Priest has sent you both to me! You are in danger of arrest, I suppose—you wish me to conceal you here?"

"I would only ask sanctuary for mademoiselle," was my reply. "For myself I have no fear. I am English, and therefore not a member of the Party."

"Well," exclaimed the gray-haired lady smiling, leading my love across the luxurious room, the atmosphere of which was filled with the scent of flowers, and taking off her cloak with her own hands, "you are safe here, my poor child. If spies have not followed you, then you shall remain my guest as long as you desire."

"I am sure it is very good of you, princess," I said gratefully. "Miss Heath is the victim of a vile and dastardly conspiracy. When I tell you that she has been afflicted as she is by her enemies—that an operation was performed upon her in Italy while she was unconscious—you will readily see in what deadly peril she is."

"What!" she cried. "Have her enemies actually done this? Horrible!"

"She will perhaps tell you of the strange romance that surrounds her—a mystery which I have not yet been able to fathom. She is a Russian subject, although she has been educated in England. Baron Oberg himself is, I believe, her worst and most bitter enemy."

"Ah! the Strangler!" she exclaimed with a quick flash in her dark eyes. "But his end is near. The movement is active in Helsingfors. At any moment now we may strike our blow for freedom."

"Who is this man Martin Woodroffe, of whom she speaks?" asked the princess presently, turning to me.

"I have met him twice—only twice," I replied, "and under strange circumstances." Then, continuing, I told her something concerning the incidents of the yacht Lola.

"He may be in love with her, and desires to force her into marriage," she suggested, expressing amazement at the curious narrative I had related. "I think not, for several reasons. One is because I know she holds some secret concerning him, and another because he is engaged to an English girl named Muriel Leithcourt."

"Leithcourt? Leithcourt?" repeated the princess, knitting her brows with a puzzled air. "Do you happen to know her father's name?"

I was telling the story of the Leithcourts when the long, white doors of the handsome salon were thrown open and there entered a man whose hair fell over the collar of his heavy overcoat, but whom, in an instant I recognized as Otto Kampf.

"I come, princess, in order to explain to you," he said. "Mademoiselle fears arrest, and the only house in Petersburg that the police never suspect is this. Therefore I send her to you, knowing that with your generosity you will help her in her distress."

"It is all arranged," was her highness' response. "She will remain here, poor girl, until it is safe for her to go out of Russia." Then, after some further conversation, and after my well-beloved had made signs of heartfelt gratitude to the man known from end to end of the Russian empire as "The Red Priest," the princess turned to me, saying:

"I would much like to know what occurred before the Leithcourts left Scotland."

"The Leithcourts!" exclaimed Kampf in utter surprise. "Do you know the Leithcourts—and the English officer Durnford?"

I looked into his eyes in amazement. What connection could Jack Durnford, Philip Leithcourt? I, however, recollected Jack's word, when I described the visit of the Lola to Leghorn, and further I recollected that very shortly he would be back in London from his term of Mediterranean service.

"Well," I said after a pause, "I happen to know Captain Durnford well, but I had no idea that he was friendly with Leithcourt."

The Red Priest smiled, stroking his white beard.

"Explain to her highness what she desires to know, and I will tell you." My eyes met Elma's, and I saw how intensely eager and interested she was, watching the movement of my lips and trying to make out what words I uttered.

"Well," I said, "a mysterious tragedy occurred on the edge of a wood near the house rented by Leithcourt—a tragedy which has puzzled the police to this day. An Italian named Santini and his wife were found murdered."

"Santini!" gasped Kampf, starting up. "But surely he is not dead?"

"No. That's the curious part of the affair. The man who was killed was a man disguised to represent the Italian, while the woman was actually the waiter's wife herself. I happen to know the man Santini well, for both he and his wife were for some years in my employ."

The princess and the director of the Russian revolutionary movement exchanged glances. It was as though her highness implored Kampf to reveal to me the truth, while he, on his part, was averse to doing so.

"And upon whom does suspicion rest?" asked her highness.

"As far as I can make out, the police have no clue whatever, except one. At the spot was found a tiny miniature cross of one of the Russian orders of chivalry—the cross of St. Anne."

"There is no suspicion upon Leithcourt?" she asked with some undue anxiety, I thought.

"No."

"Then why did the Leithcourts disappear so suddenly?"

"Because of the appearance of the man Chater," I replied. "It is evident that they feared him, for they took every precaution against being followed. In fact, they fled, leaving a big party of friends in the house. The man Woodroffe, now at the Hotel de Paris, is a friend of Leithcourt as well as of Chater."

"He was not a guest of Leithcourt when this man representing Santini was assassinated?" asked Kampf, again stroking his beard.

"No. As soon as Woodroffe recognized me as a visitor he left—for Hamburg."

"He was afraid to face you because of the ransacking of the British consul's safe at Leghorn," remarked the princess, who, at the same moment, took Elma's hand tenderly in her own and looked at her. Then, turning to me, she said: "What you have told us tonight, Mr. Gregg, throws a new light upon certain incidents that had hitherto puzzled us. The mystery of it all is a great and inscrutable one—the mystery of this poor, unfortunate



"I Have No Further Need to Doubt You."

girl, greatest of all. But both of us will endeavor to help you to elucidate it; we will help poor Elma to crush her enemies—these cowardly villains who have maimed her."

"Ah, princess!" I cried. "If you will only help and protect her, you will be doing an act of mercy to a defenseless woman. I love her—I admit it. I have done my utmost; I have striven to solve the dark mystery, but up to the present I have been unsuccessful, and have only remained, even till today, the victim of circumstance."

"Let her stay with me," the kindly woman answered, smiling tenderly upon my love. "She will be safe here, and in the morning we will endeavor to discover the real and actual truth."

And in response I took the princess' hand and pressed it fervently.

I scribbled a few hasty words upon paper and handed it to Elma. And for answer she smiled contentedly, looking into my eyes with an expression of trust, devotion and love.

CHAPTER XV.

Just Off the Strand.

A week had gone by. The Nord express had brought me posthaste

across Europe from Petersburg to Calais, and I was again in London.

It was a cold but dry November night and I sat dining with Jack Durnford at a small table in the big well-lit room of the Junior United Service club. Easy-going and merry as of old, my friend was bubbling over with good spirits, delighted to be back again in town after three years' sailing up and down the Mediterranean, from Gib. to Smyrna, maneuvering always, yet with never a chance of a fight.

"Glad to be back!" he exclaimed, as he helped himself to a "peg." "I should rather think so, old chap. You know how awfully wearying the life becomes out there. Lots going on down at Palermo, Malta, Monte Carlo, or over at Algiers, and yet we can never get a chance of it."

Dinner finished, we went across to the Empire, where we spent the evening in the grand circle, meeting many men we knew and having a rather pleasant time among old acquaintances.

After the theater I induced him to come round to the Cecil, and in the wicker chairs in the big portico before the entrance we sat to smoke our final cigars. And there, in a carefully careless way, I told him the story of the Leithcourts.

"You seem a bit down in the mouth, Jack," I said presently, after we had been watching the cabs coming up, depositing the home-coming revelers from the Savoy or the Carlton.

"Yes," he sighed. "And surely I have enough to cause me—after what I've heard from you."

"What! Did the facts convey any bad news to you?" I inquired with pretended ignorance.

"Yes," he said hoarsely, after a brief pause. Then he added: "And Martin Woodroffe is engaged to Muriel Leithcourt. Are you certain of this?"

"Yes, quite certain."

For some time Jack Durnford smoked in silence, and I could just distinguish his white, hard face in the faint light, for it was now late, and the big electric lamps had been turned out and we were in semidarkness.

"That fellow shall never marry Muriel," he declared in a fierce, hoarse voice. "What you have just told me reveals the truth. Did you meet Chater?"

"He appeared suddenly at Rannoch, and the Leithcourts fled precipitately and have not since been heard of."

"Ah, no wonder!" he remarked with a dry laugh. "No wonder! But look here, Gordon, I'm not going to stand by and let that scoundrel Woodroffe marry Muriel."

"You love her, perhaps?" I hazarded.

"Yes, I do love her," he admitted. "And, by heaven!" he cried, "I will tell the truth and crush the whole of their ingenious plot. Have you met Elma Heath?" he asked.

"Yes," I said in quick anxiety.

"Then listen," he said in a low, earnest voice. "Listen, and I'll tell you something."

"There is a greater mystery surrounding that yacht, the Lola, than you have ever imagined, my dear old chap," declared Jack Durnford, looking me straight in the face. "When you told me about it on the quarter-deck that day outside Leghorn I was half a mind to tell you what I knew. Only one fact prevented me—my disinclination to reveal my own secrets. I loved Muriel Leithcourt, yet, aloof as I was, I could never see her—I could not obtain from her own lips the explanation I desired. Yet I would not prejudice her—no, and I won't now!" he added with fierce resolution.

"I love her," he went on, "and she reciprocates my love. Ours is a secret engagement, made in Malta two years ago, and yet you tell me that she has pledged herself to that fellow Woodroffe—the man known here in London as Dick Archer. I can't believe it—I really can't, old fellow. She could never write to me as she has done, urging patience and secrecy until my return."

"Woodroffe is at the present moment in Petersburg," I said. "I've just come back from there."

"In St. Petersburg!" he gasped, surprised. "Then he is with that villainous official, Baron Oberg, the governor general of Finland."

"No; Oberg is living shut up in his palace at Helsingfors, fearing to go out lest he shall be assassinated," was my answer.

"And Elma? What has become of her?"

"She is in hiding in Petersburg, awaiting such time as I can get her safely out of Russia," and then, continuing, I explained how she had been maimed and rendered deaf and dumb.

"What!" he cried fiercely. "Have they actually done that to the poor girl? Then they feared that she would reveal the nature of their plot, for she had seen and heard."

"I intend to rescue and to marry her," I said quite frankly. "But from whom do you expect I can obtain the facts concerning her, and the reason of the baron's desire to keep her silent?"

"Ah!" he said, twisting his mustache thoughtfully. "That's just the question. She may be the victim of that blackleg Woodroffe, who is one of the most expert swindlers in London, and who has already done two terms of penal servitude."

"But he is on extremely friendly terms with Elma. It was he who succeeded in finding her in Finland, and taking her beyond Oberg's sphere of influence to Petersburg."

"Then it is certainly only an affected friendship, with some sinister motive underlying it."

"She wrote a letter from her island prison to an old schoolfellow named Lydia Moreton, asking her to see Woodroffe at his rooms in Cork street, and tell him that through all she was



"That Fellow Shall Never Marry Muriel."

suffering she had kept her promise to him, and that the secret was still safe.

"Exactly. And now the fellow fears that as you are so actively searching out the truth, she may yield to your demands and explain. He therefore intends to silence her."

"What! to kill her, you mean?" I gasped, in quick apprehension.

"Well, he might do so, in order to save himself, you see," Jack replied.

I tried to get from him all that he knew concerning Elma, but he seemed, for some reason, disinclined to tell. All I could gather was that Leithcourt was in league with Chater and Woodroffe, and that Muriel had acted as an entirely innocent agent.

"We must find Muriel," he declared, when I pressed him to tell me everything he knew. "There are facts you have told me which negative my own theories, and only from her can we obtain the real truth."

"But surely you know where she is? She writes to you," I said.

"The last letter, which I received at Gib. ten days ago, was from the Hotel Bristol, at Botzen, in the Tyrol, yet Bartlett says she has been seen down at Eastbourne."

"But you have an address where you always write to her, I suppose?"

"Yes, a secret one. I have written and made an appointment, but she has not kept it. She has been prevented, of course. She may be with her parents, and unable to come to London."

"You did not know that they had fled, and were in hiding?"

"Of course not. What I've heard tonight is news to me—amazing news."

"And does it not convey to you the truth?"

"It does—a ghastly truth concerning Elma Heath," he answered in a low voice, as though speaking to himself.

"Tell me. What? I'm dying, Jack, to know everything concerning her. Who is that fellow Oberg?"

"Her enemy. She, by mere accident, learned his secret and Woodroffe's, and they now both live in deadly fear of her."

"But Chater?"

"I know very little concerning him. He may have conspired with them, or he may be innocent. It seems as though he were antagonistic to their schemes, if Leithcourt and his family really fled from him."

"And yet he was on board the Lola. Indeed, he may have helped to commit the burglary at the consulate," I said.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Appropriate Remedy.

"I have so much of that run-down feeling."

"What are you doing for it?"

"Oh, every now and then I take a sick-mess."